

COMMUNITY LINK

Newsletter of the City of San Antonio  May 2001

Neighborhood Sweeps ■ Conservation Districts ■ Economic Development ■ River Walk Development ■ Rally for Children ■ Household Hazardous Waste Collection

Summer splash!

It's almost summertime and the Parks and Recreation Department has something for everyone in your family. From swimming pools to karate lessons to softball leagues, there are plenty of things to keep you busy. Many of these activities start soon, so now is the time to sign up.

City pools open May 26. You and the kids can cool off at one of 22 pools for a very reasonable admission. Swimming lessons and water aerobics also are available. Kids 6 to 19 are invited to be part of the Summer Youth Recreation Program from June 4 to July 27. Activities will include arts and crafts, field trips, basketball clinics and pool parties.

Swing into summer with the City's adult and youth softball leagues. Adult and junior clinics are offered in tennis and golf. Try your hands or feet at adult and youth karate or dance classes. For the future stars, try out for City talent shows. Therapeutic recreation programs are available for people with disabilities. Activities offered to seniors include field trips, lunches, games and exercise classes.

For the outdoorsy type, the Parks Department offers a day camp at Friedrich Wilderness Park for youngsters age 7 to 12. The First and Second Saturdays Program invites the whole family to take a closer look at nature with a variety of interesting topics.

For more information on Parks and Recreation summer programs, call **207-3000**.



Thanks to public servants

May is Public Service Month! Since 1985, the month of May has been set aside at the national level to educate Americans about the broad variety of services provided by their government. As public servants, City employees contribute to the community through picking up garbage, serving the elderly, putting out fires, making streets safe, ensuring public health and hundreds of other jobs. Join the City of San Antonio in recognizing the work of more than 12,000 City employees during Public Service Month.

Improving communication in the community

Council Action Team

Like many cities, San Antonio has experienced a significant increase in population over the past 10 years. With this growth comes a variety of needs for the community whose voices are heard through more than 360 neighborhood/community organizations throughout San Antonio. In an effort to continue the City's high priority on customer service, the Council Action Team (CAT) was created last summer to address the increase in requests and demand for services by providing better communication between specialized City departments and the community.

The Council Action Team is made up of five City employees, each working in two City Council districts. Team members are completely mobile in order to address issues in each of the districts assigned. They provide an accountable point of contact for City councilmembers to better address important service delivery issues. They also help facilitate communication between councilmembers and City departments as well as work to proactively identify, address and resolve community and neighborhood issues and concerns.

As part of the job, a Team member receives direct calls for assistance from councilmembers or council staff and serves as an ombudsman to resolve service delivery issues. Team members attend neighborhood meetings and are charged with taking proactive steps to anticipate problems throughout the council districts. They also have the authority to creatively resolve issues and coordinate complete service delivery resolution.





Community Link Service Centers

Need a garage sale permit? Have to pay a traffic ticket? Want to register a complaint? Stop by our convenient service centers...

- Las Palmas Shopping Center
803 Castroville Rd, Suite 132
207-6545 **Open M-F 8-6, Sat 10-6**
- McCreless Mall
4100 S. New Braunfels
207-6570 **Open M-Sat 10-7**
- South Park Mall
2310 S.W. Military
207-6141 **Open M-Sat 10-7**
- Valley View Shopping Center
8523 Blanco Road
207-6150 **Open M-F 8-6, Sat 10-6**

www.ci.sat.tx.us/sapd

Real time traffic data saves headaches on your way home. Check crime data reports to see if thieves are infiltrating your community. Find out how to get involved in community



Neighborhood sweeps make a difference

Painting the town

Serving one neighborhood at a time, the City's Neighborhood Sweep Program has served more than 70 neighborhoods since February 1998. Through this nationally recognized program, the City provides neighborhoods with a wide array of services in a comprehensive manner to address problems identified by residents.

Neighborhood needs vary from one area to another and the communities are equally diverse. The sweep program is tailored to meet the particular needs of each neighborhood. The key to a successful sweep is the level of involvement from the residents because they know their community better than anyone and can reach a consensus on priority issues. Sweep coordinators from the Neighborhood Action Department work hand in hand with neighborhood leaders and residents to identify issues and goals for their sweep. Together, they develop a plan of action to ensure that residents and City staff can monitor the progress of the sweep.

As part of each sweep, a variety of City departments infiltrate a neighborhood with their services. Code compliance investigations, street and pothole repair, graffiti removal and animal control are part of a long list of services that are available. Community partnerships and volunteers also are critical components of the sweeps. The program relies on these to deliver services that may be outside the scope of services delivered by the City, such as fixing up the home of an elderly resident.

Surveys have shown that residents are more aware of how to utilize or access services as a result of the sweeps. Applications already are being accepted for sweeps to be conducted during the City's next fiscal year that begins October 1, 2001. Two neighborhoods are selected in each council district each year. For more information or to request an application, call **207-7881**.

Upcoming Sweeps

Mobile City Estates **5/7-5/18**
West Avenue **5/14-5/26**
Shearer Hills/Ridgeview **5/29-6/9**
Government Hill **5/29-6/9**
La Vaca/Presa Real **6/18-6/30**
Thunderbird Hills **6/25-7/7**



Graffiti abatement is an important part of the sweep program.

Neighborhood Conservation Districts

Showing some character

The recently adopted Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD) ordinance is the latest tool neighborhoods can use to address appropriateness of new construction in both residential and commercial neighborhoods.

The development of the NCD ordinance and program responds to the City's 1997 Master Plan and recommendations of the Community Revitalization Action Group in 1998, addressing concerns about protection of neighborhood character for new residential and commercial construction. Applied in the form of a zoning overlay designation, neighborhoods will be able to establish a unique ordinance addressing the concerns outlined by the residents and property owners within a specified boundary.

General criteria for establishing the boundaries of a neighborhood conservation district include an area: of at least one blockface; where 75 percent of the properties are at least 25 years old, and presently improved; and that must possess certain character-defining features. These features are translated into design standards that can be objectively reviewed when a building permit is requested for a property within the boundaries of a NCD.

A NCD can offer a more predictable course of development for both the development community and neighborhood property owners; an efficient building permit process without the necessity of a Commission review; and a means of self-determination for residential and commercial neighborhood organizations.

NCDs are initiated through either a petition process or through the Director of Planning, pursuant to actions identified in a neighborhood plan. Several neighborhoods with completed neighborhood plans that identified NCDs as an appropriate planning tool already have indicated interest in establishing a NCD. The first cycle of applications will be accepted from May 16 through June 1, and selected applicants will be notified in late June. The NCD process, from initiation to ordinance adoption by City Council, is based on community

support and consensus and should take four to 14 months to complete, depending on the complexity of the design standards.

For more information on Neighborhood Conservation Districts, call the Neighborhood and Urban Division of the Planning Department, **207-7873**, or access www.ci.sat.tx.us/planning/neighborhoods.



The next generation economy

The San Antonio economy is at a crossroads. For decades, defense bases, government and an array of service and manufacturing employers defined the local economy. San Antonio has lagged behind other regions in discovering its new economic identity. Business, institution and community leaders, working to move the local economy forward, have come together with the City to develop a new economic approach that aims at accelerating technology as a growing enterprise in the Alamo City.

Analysts have studied San Antonio and agree that it has many of the ingredients required to build a next generation economy. Through the San Antonio Technology Accelerator Initiative (SATAI), a collaborative strategy has been developed that focuses on four local emerging industries: biotechnology, information technology, telecommunication and aviation. Through the SATAI, regional businesses and institutions have been asked to follow a set of new rules that will allow the initiative to work effectively in the local economy. Those rules include:

thinking regionally; focusing on building industry clusters that are groups of exporters, suppliers and institutions such as banks or utilities that provide vital inputs to business operations; creating advantages that help grow clusters; and collaborating and creating new partnerships that are willing to use existing resources in new ways.

The City's Economic Development Department is a major player in coordinating the efforts of the SATAI. For more information, check the department's Internet website at www.ci.sat.tx.us/edd.

San Antonio River Walk flowing in new directions

A River runs through it

Architects, contractors and construction workers are taking the San Antonio River Walk in several new directions. Multiple projects along the River Walk are in full swing and once these projects are completed they will create new linkages and easier access to the River Walk from the north, south, east and west sides of the River.

The largest project is the extension of the River Walk through the Convention Center Expansion project to HemisFair Park. The site will include an accordion-inspired bridge facing Market Street. It will be an impressive two-story glass and steel structure that will allow a spectacular view of the San Antonio River flowing underneath and allow conventioners direct and easy access to the River Walk.

While this project links the River Walk on the south side, another will be the gateway to the west. A new project connects the river to Main Plaza as part of the Historic Civic Center. This project offers a park setting with lighting, landscaping and a series of steps and sidewalks connecting the street to the River Walk. Since 1718, Plaza de Armas and Plaza de Islas (Main Plaza) have been the civic center of San Antonio. The City has developed a master plan to connect the River Walk to this historically significant area and allow for easy access to the river from the west.

Soon to open across from the Hilton Palacio Del Rio in River Walk Park is a new Park Ranger station and the first public restrooms at the river level. An elevator to improve handicapped access also is planned for this facility in the near future.

Just around the corner in the River bend is a project that will link the River Walk to the east. The Presa Street Linkage project is currently underway next to the Hyatt Regency Hotel. This project will open up the Presa Street bridge to allow more natural light to shine on the River Walk and will feature a spectacular waterfall with a staircase and elevator that will link the River Walk to Presa and Houston Streets.

A stone's throw away is the site of the Crockett Street Project. This construction will create a new hotel, retail shops, a fountain and a refurbished Aztec Theatre.

The North Channel from Lexington to Houston streets is undergoing some major changes including improvements to the flood channel, new landscaping, sidewalks and lighting. This is the first phase of a joint project between Bexar County, the San Antonio River Authority, the City and the private sector for improvements to the San Antonio River from Brackenridge Park to Mission Espada.



TransGuide on TV

Morning and afternoon commuters can get a sneak peek at rush hour traffic by viewing TransGuide on the City Hall Information Channel. TransGuide is shown Monday through Friday from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. and from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. (except Thursday afternoons) on cable channel 21. Also check channel 21 for TransGuide during periods of heavy inclement weather. TransGuide currently covers 63 miles of San Antonio highways. The City Hall Information Channel broadcasts City Council meetings and other local government programming.



City questions? Give us a ring!

Is there a stray animal roaming your neighborhood? Have you driven by a pothole that needs to be fixed? Tired of looking at that overgrown lot down the street? Pick up the phone, call 3-1-1 and make your connection to the solution.



The Historic Civic Center connection to the River Walk across from Main Plaza will be completed later this summer.

► Every Thursday

City Council meetings 1:00 p.m.
City Council Chambers
(Broadcast live on cable channel 21)
207-7080

► Saturday, May 26

City pools open
Call 207-3113 for information on
locations, admission prices and
swimming lessons.

► Monday, May 28

City Holiday - Memorial Day
Garbage, recyclables, brush will be
collected. City offices, libraries closed.

► Friday, June 1

Swearing-in of new Mayor
and City Councilmembers
1:00 p.m.
City Council Chambers
Municipal Plaza Building
103 Main Plaza
207-7060

► Saturday, June 2

Stand for Children Rally
10:00 a.m.
Alamo Plaza to Milam Park
207-6366

► Saturday, June 2

Household Hazardous Waste Collection
8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Blossom Athletic Center
12002 Jones-Maltsberger
207-6400

► Saturday, June 16

Showcase of City Programs
10 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
McCreless Mall
207-3312

► Wednesday, July 4

City Holiday - Independence Day
Garbage, recyclables, brush will not
be collected. City offices, libraries will
be closed.

Stand For Children rally

CHIP in for a Child

Statistics show one in four children in Texas lacks health care coverage, the second highest rate of uninsured children in the nation. Through the Sixth Annual Stand For Children rally on **Saturday, June 2**, a call will go out to all of those who care about the welfare and health of children. This year's rally, *CHIP in for a Child*, will highlight the need for every Texas child to have adequate health insurance.

Organizers in San Antonio are asking anyone who works with, teaches, cares for, or simply loves children to help support this cause by joining the rally which begins at Alamo Plaza at 10:00 a.m. and proceeds to Milam Park with Grand Marshal Patsy Torres leading the way.

The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) was created through the TexCare Partnership, an initiative of the state of Texas that provides free or low cost health insurance to uninsured Texas children. The purpose of this year's rally is to promote and raise awareness of the CHIP program and to kick off a summer of events that will enable families to sign up for CHIP. The City focuses local resources on children's issues through the Department of Community Initiatives. Call 207-6366 for more information.



Household Hazardous Waste Collection

Clean out your cabinets

Kitchen cabinets and garages often become home to a number of unused household cleaners, smelly old bug sprays or half-empty cans of paint, all pushed to the back of a cabinet or shelf in favor of a newer or better product. Some have dried up while some can still be used. Either way, the City offers a safe, environmentally friendly way to dispose of these types of wastes instead of pouring them down the drain or putting them in the garbage. On **Saturday, June 2**, the City has scheduled its next free Household Hazardous Waste Collection as Blossom Athletic Center, 12002 Jones-Maltsberger. From 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., you can drop off unwanted items without even having to get out of your vehicle. Items should be kept in their original containers and placed in the trunk of your car. Qualified handlers will remove them for you.

Thanks to citizen participation, more than 1,500 tons of household hazardous wastes have been collected through the quarterly event. Approximately 80 percent of these wastes are recycled and the rest is safely disposed. Items that will be accepted at the collection include:



► Garage/Garden

used motor oil
antifreeze
batteries
brake fluid
herbicides/pesticides
pool chemicals
tires (limit 8)

► Cleaning Products

drain cleaners
oven cleaners
spot removers
tile cleaners
furniture polish
metal polish
bathroom cleaners

► Paint, Supplies

paint thinner
paint stripper
mineral spirits
lacquer
wood treatments
solvents
spray cans

Neighborhoods accept Challenge

More than 50 San Antonio neighborhoods enthusiastically responded to the first call for applications to the Neighborhood Learning Fund, a component of the Planning Department's Neighborhood Improvement Challenge Program. The 2001 class topic is newsletters, from design to distribution. Neighborhoods will receive \$750 to start or improve their newsletter.

The Planning Department heard from many residents who stressed how important newsletters are to communicating information in their neighborhoods. Based on the strong positive response to the Neighborhood Learning Fund application, the Planning Department is offering a second session of the class in order to serve nearly all of the 2001 applicants.

In addition to the Neighborhood Learning Fund, the Neighborhood Improvement Challenge Program also includes the Neighborhood Tree Fund (free trees for your neighborhood) and the Neighborhood Project Fund (\$2,500 - \$5,000 for community improvement projects). For more information, call the Planning Department at **207-7873**.

COMMUNITY LINK is published bi-monthly by the City of San Antonio's Public Information Office, **207-7235**.

This newsletter also can be found on the City's Internet website at www.ci.sat.tx.us/pio. Material may be reprinted.